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# U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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# Proper Care pays big dividends

Effective "follow through" soon after planting is just as essential for success with the small backyard vegetable garden as a good beginning, say U. S. Department of Agriculture gardening specialists. Important follow-through steps will include weeding, thinning, and watering at the proper time and in the right way to enable the young plants to establish themselves quickly and continue vigorous growth until maturity.

All gardeners, even first-year beginners, understand the importance of keeping all weeds out of the garden. Weeds compete with the crops for light, moisture, and plant nutrients.

As soon as the soil can be properly worked after each rain or irrigation, it should be thoroughly hoed or cultivated to kill weeds that have sprouted and to leave the surface in a loose friable condition to absorb later rainfall. The primary value of hoeing or cultivating, however, is to control weeds. Cultivation should be shallow to avoid injuring the vegetable plant roots that lie near the surface.

In very small gardens the common hoe is the only tool required for weed control although unusual designs of hoes and hand cultivators are preferred by some gardeners. Wheel hoes are recommended for all but very small gardens. *Chemical weed killers are not recommended for the home garden* because of the danger of injuring crops that are very sensitive to weed killers.

One of the commonest mistakes of beginners is planting seeds too thickly and then failing to thin out the small seedlings in the row to give them space enough for good growth. Planting some excess of seed is partial insurance against having plants too far apart in the row, but if the plants are too close together they will not develop as desired. Rows that are too thick may need thinning two or three times, gradually



1. Good tools, clean and in proper condition for the job to be done, are an aid to easy garden care. Prevent rust and corrosion and keep cutting tools sharp. S-17525

widening the spaces between plants before crowding occurs until the final recommended spacing is obtained. Gradual thinning helps insure against loss of plants that would leave the survivors standing too far apart.

In most parts of this country gardens need some artificial watering at one time or another. Even short dry spells interfere with growth and reduce the quality of most vegetables. Some form of irrigation, therefore, should be provided if it is at all feasible.

Light sprinkling or other moistening of a crusted soil will help seedlings emerge to a good stand. After seedlings emerge, however, each irrigation should moisten the soil down to 8 to 10 inches deep when the plants need it. Frequent light sprinkling on most soils does little good and may aggravate certain leaf diseases by wetting the tops too often. On deep, sandy soils that hold little water, frequent light irrigation is necessary.



2. Seedlings must be thinned promptly to avoid crowding in the row. At the first thinning plants may be left two to four times as thick as the final stand to help insure against early loss. S-17568

3. At the last thinning, turnips are left 3 to 4 inches apart. The weaker plants should be pulled out, leaving the stronger ones as near the desired distance apart as possible. S-17569

4. There is an art in the use of the common hoe. When kept sharp and bright, and used properly, excellent work can be done in the small garden without excessive effort. S-17570



5. A wheel hoe is a great labor-saver for the larger garden. Most cultivation should be done with "sweeps" or scrapers that do not dig into the soil deeply enough to injure the roots of the vegetables. M-342

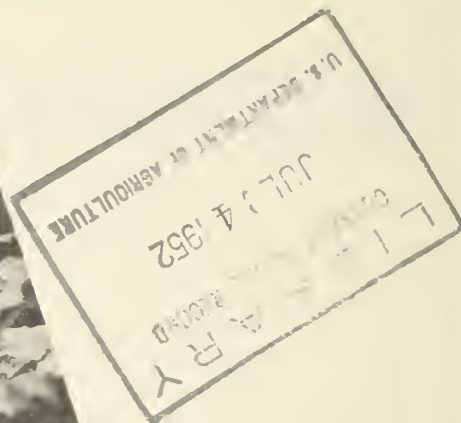


6. If there is room for it, and the same plot is available for several years, asparagus is a good crop except in the warmest parts of this country. It is one of the first vegetables to be harvested. S-17509



7. Even in the so-called humid parts of the United States garden crops often need some irrigation during short dry spells. The cabbage plants on the left have been mulched lightly to conserve water and help keep down weeds. M-710





8. If the ground is not suited to furrow irrigation or it is desirable to keep the leaves dry to help avoid certain diseases, a special porous hose is a good watering device. S-17440



9. When soil character and slope are suitable, the furrow method of irrigation is the most common. A bunch of straw is placed at the end of the hose to prevent the washing of the soil. S-17436

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